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NEW LIGHT IN THE CESNOLA CASE.

LITTLE by little the worthlessness of the report of the investigating committee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art exonerating General Di Cesnola from Mr. Feuarent's charges becomes incontrovertibly established. The charges first appeared in this magazine a year and a half ago. Had we not been satisfied that they were supported by strong prima facie evidence we need hardly say that such serious accusations would have found no place in our columns. Before the Museum's half-hearted investigation most of the daily journals seemed inclined to believe with us that the Cesnola Cyprian antiquities bought by the Museum for the large sum of \$140,000 had been deprived of all archaeological value by their falsification and ignorant restoration. Then came the ex-parte report of the investigating committee. It was signed by men of high social position in the city and was accepted, just as some ten years ago the report of the committee of leading citizens exonerating Tweed and his confederates was accepted. In each instance the committee was led by the nose, being carefully steered from the salient facts in the case. After the report of Mr. Prime's committee, the daily newspapers, with two notable exceptions, had nothing to say in support of Mr. Feuarent, and some of them abused him roundly as a slanderer. Mr. Prime's report was published broadcast, and for the time truth seemed crushed completely by the simple weight of a few names.

With a degree of patience and courage worthy of all admiration, and impossible in one not thoroughly honest and in earnest, Mr. Feuarent has devoted himself to the task of establishing the truth of his charges, and thereby annulling the committee's unjust report. His further communications to THE ART AMATEUR and his powerful series of "cards" with photographic illustrations (which could not be declared falsifications of the originals, as was charged against some of the first illustrations which appeared in our columns) have fully satisfied intelligent doubters on both sides of the Atlantic. Professor Sidney Colvin, who apparently had hitherto believed in General Di Cesnola, has withdrawn his promise to write the preface to the latter's new work on the Cyprian collections. M. de Longperier, a famous French archaeologist, whose death occurred a few days ago, wrote to Mr. Feuarent asking him to investigate the genuineness of a mysterious symbol, a double-headed eagle sculptured on one of the Cyprian statues (Cesnola's "Cyprus," page 154). "Has this figure been tampered with?" he asks, adding: "It is of the greatest importance that all the truth should be known regarding the statues and the painted vases. Since your publications with their criticisms we are forced to look at them all with suspicion." The mysterious symbol referred to proved on investigation to be an Austrian or Russian eagle!

In this country nothing has done more to strengthen the general belief in Mr. Feuarent's charges than General Di Cesnola's disinclination to let the matter come to trial before the courts. Sure of vindication before a jury, Mr. Feuarent, after giving the director of the Museum abundant opportunity to appear as plaintiff in a libel suit, determines to become one himself. He sues the general for defamation of character. The latter, through his lawyers, obtains repeated postponements, and when at length it is too late to get the case on the calendar, he procures by means of a legal quibble, its transfer to another court which can not reach it for a year.

Now comes one more link in the chain of evidence to show the utter worthlessness of the report of Mr. Prime's "investigating" committee. Great stress was laid on the fact that the statues suspected of being made of fragments had stood the test of soaking them in water. No cement is known, it was declared, which would not yield to such an ordeal. We are prepared to say that there is such a cement, and in proof of the assertion publish the recipe for making it. It is as follows:

- One part of old goats' cheese.
- Two parts of quick lime.
- Two parts of fine sand.

The ingredients are dissolved in boiling water and applied at once. When cold and dry, this cement will be harder than the calcareous stone, and is waterproof. This recipe is well known to "doctors" of antiquities in Cyprus, and it is charitable to suppose that many of General Di Cesnola's specimens were treated

with it, before they were purchased by him for the purpose of being subsequently discovered at Golgoi and other convenient localities.

AN ÆSTHETIC PRETENDER.

It was a shrewd idea of the agent of Messrs. Gilbert and Sullivan to bring Oscar Wilde to this country to use him as a side-show to "Patience." The young man has little to recommend him to public notice, and were he an American it is safe to say no one would pay five cents to see or hear him. But he comes with foreign credentials, and that makes a difference.

In England a sated society constantly craves some new "sensation," the smallest social attraction being gratefully received. One day society is pleased to amuse itself by "taking up" some obscure beauty and crowning her queen, and another day it bestows its ephemeral approval on some ridiculous person affecting long hair, a low-necked shirt, and stained-glass attitudes. Mr. Wilde has had his turn in London society, although we have not heard that any one found him lion enough to pay to see him. His amusing pretensions to æsthetic culture and his maudlin erotic verse were first noticed by Du Maurier, the clever satirist of "Punch," who, recognizing in him a picturesque example of the æsthetic sham he so delights to portray, adopted him as a model, and week after week holds him up to ridicule. It was in this way Mr. Wilde won the notoriety he now so coolly seeks to turn to pecuniary advantage in this country.

He is of a type which, we judge, must be common enough in London society, but which happily can never be other than an exotic in this common-sense land of ours. Americans have a keen sense of the humorous, and often laugh at caricatures of certain phases of English social and political life without quite understanding the causes that have called them forth. "H.M.S. Pinafore," which was even more successful here than in England, is a case in point. It was so funny in itself that it was not necessary to ask for its motive. Lady Jane and the other nineteen love-sick maidens are complete strangers to us, and we had never seen a real Bunthorne until Oscar Wilde came among us. But we enjoy Gilbert and Sullivan's delicious satire not a whit the less on that account. Mr. D'Oyley Carte understands this; but, knowing us to be always ready for amusement and willing to pay for it, brings out this young man during a dull season, trusting to judicious advertising and condemnatory newspaper criticism to turn him to pecuniary profit for a few weeks at all events. The public, of course, could hardly be expected to pay a dollar for merely seeing Mr. Wilde in knee-breeches adore a lily or pose à la Bunthorne; so it is arranged that he shall deliver a lecture on art. Curiosity-seekers went to see him at his first entertainment at Chickering Hall. He read a sophomoric essay on "The English Renaissance;" but it was so uninteresting, or his elocution was so bad, that a large part of the audience left the hall long before he had finished. He repeated the performance in Philadelphia, and was listened to amid death-like silence.

Mr. Wilde complains that he is "coldly received" by his audiences. Why should it be otherwise? What has he to tell them that is new? What claim has he on their enthusiasm? He knows that they go to see him only as a show. They pay liberally for the whim. What more can he expect? In his lecture, it is true, he would lead one to suppose that in some way or other he has been instrumental in bringing about the art revival in England. But we all know better than that. He is a mere excrescence of the movement. Its real authors were workers like Eastlake, Morris, Holman Hunt, Burne-Jones, Rossetti, and Maddox-Brown. Mr. Wilde connects his name with their work apparently with no higher aim than self-glorification. With all his pretensions it may be said the only thing he has given us that is new is the discreditable spectacle of an Englishman of birth and education turning mountebank without even the excuse of pecuniary necessity. Let Mr. Wilde take his pay and be silent.

THE appeal for funds by the American Archaeological Institute to aid them in prosecuting their excavations at Assos ought to meet with a willing response. The promoters of the enterprise were imprudent to engage in it before securing the means of carrying it out, and it may well be doubted whether their energies would

not have been better directed in first working the comparatively unexplored fields for archaeological research in this country. But they have labored energetically already with interesting results, and it would be a merited reproach to the American name if from want of funds they were obliged to abandon their very promising work at this early stage of the proceedings.

My Note Book.



WRITING from London last summer I described the "Sappho" by Alma Tadema at the Royal Academy exhibition, little thinking that this beautiful picture was to find a home in America. It seems, however, that it was painted for Mr. Walters, of Baltimore, the price being \$17,500,

and it is now in his wonderful collection. Mr. Deschamps, the artist's business representative, arrived in New York a few weeks ago, bringing with him, besides this, some other works by Alma Tadema. A small canvas, called "The Tepidarium," which has not been exhibited yet in England, shows a nude woman reclining after the bath. The firm flesh glows with life and affords an interesting contrast with the marble of the bath and of the sides of the lounge. The grace of the composition is somewhat impaired by the feather held in the hand as a fan being too evidently introduced for a purely conventional purpose.

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A MORE important picture shows a graceful youth, seated with a fair-haired girl on a curved white marble bench overlooking the sea, all blue and sparkling in the sun. The winsome beauty and gay attire find a foil in the sardonic aspect of a bronze sphinx in the background. The youth wears an anxious expression; he has offered his love a bouquet of red roses, bound with a yellow fillet bearing the words "Amo te—ama me," and she has turned from him without accepting the gift. The perfect drawing, the grace of composition, subtle analysis of light and shade, and the consummate knowledge of local color evidenced in every texture in this charming picture stamp Alma Tadema beyond cavil as one of the first of living artists.

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MR. HUBERT HERKOMER, I am credibly informed, intends to visit this country soon, and will lecture on art.

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DEALERS in works of art often draw a sharp line between their business and their private lives, and their homes are conspicuously barren of adornment with such objects as they are in the habit of selling. A gentleman who had charge of the art bronze department of a large concern in this city, and who was an expert in his way, once told me he was so "sick of bronzes" nothing would induce him to have one in his house. This kind of feeling, often, is due to the dealer having only a commercial interest in art. Some dealers will sell you anything they have. Others occasionally select from their purchases objects which they keep for their private gratification, and you could hardly tempt them to part with them. Mr. Davis Collamore one day showed me a remarkably fine piece of Haviland ware with relief decoration of uncommon beauty in modelling. He passed his hand caressingly over the glaze, which was without a flaw; he held the piece off at a little distance to "take in" the color; he patted it gently, as if it had been a dear child with whom he was about to part, and, with a sigh, tenderly handed it back to the salesman, saying, "Put it on the shelf, John, I would rather no one would buy it."

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MR. WATSON is another dealer who does not tire of beautiful objects simply because he has to sell them. His private apartments in his storehouse of treasure in Fifth Avenue are perfect, and contain many a work of art which money could not buy. A small bedroom, he fitted up as a surprise for a young kinsman, is so remarkable for the luxury and taste of its appointments that I venture to describe it:

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THE ceiling and cornices are painted golden bronze, the latter being picked out with green and silver bronze, repeated throughout the woodwork, which has the general appearance of Japanese aventurine lacquer.

A dark-hued tapestry paper with metallic diaper pattern serves as an effective background for the choice little paintings on the walls and a fine iridescent Moorish plate suspended above one of the doors. A quaint hammered metal lamp with heavy silk cord and tassels of pomegranate red hangs from the ceiling with picturesque effect. Excepting some odd chairs, curiously carved and luxuriously upholstered, the furniture is of ebonized cherry with brass fittings. A dull brown, heavy Axminster carpet shows to advantage two or three Turkish rugs, excellent in color. The general sombreness of the walls and furniture acts as a foil to the rich coloring of the drapery, which is chiefly plush of robin's-egg blue. This, with old gold plush, makes a curtain for the fireplace, over which is a piece of rare Chinese silk embroidery—a many-hued floral design upon a brilliant yellow ground. Above is a trophy of arms. The two doors are concealed by portières of choice embroidered stuffs with colors mellowed by age.

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THE dressing-table, covered with blue and gold brocade, is resplendent with richly mounted toilet articles. Scattered about on table and cabinet are Japanese curios of the kind most prized by the connoisseur, such as damascened and engraved sword-hilts, curiously carved ivory netzkes and fine lacquer inros. Nothing contributes more to the beauty of the apartment, however, than the draping of the single window facing the entrance. A painted Moorish arch takes the place of a lambrequin, under which, from a brass pole and rings, hang heavy blue plush curtains, which, drawn aside, display an Algerian burnous of many-colored horizontal stripes, covering the entire window, through which the daylight filters as through stained glass. On an ebony stand by the bed is a reading-lamp of Bennett faience. Everything for use in the room is unique and in perfect taste, from the odd-shaped Royal Worcester basin and ewer to the little Japanese match-safe of charming workmanship on the dressing-table.

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SPEAKING of gifts to museums, Mr. James Jackson Jarves remarks in a letter to *The Times*: "It seems to me that those who are disposed to criticize most severely objects given with good intention to a public institution might carry more weight with their words if they would employ their superior knowledge in giving superior objects themselves." If critics and givers were equally wealthy, there might be some sense in the remark. But everybody knows such is not the case. As the Tichborne claimant sagely observed, "Some folks has money and no brains and other folks has brains and no money," and it sometimes happens that the criticisms of those folks who have "brains and no money" act as a wholesome check on the vagaries of the folks who have "money and no brains."

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IN this same letter, Mr. Jarves, referring to the hostile criticism on the recently acquired marble busts of the ancients in the vestibule of the Astor Library, says: "Care was taken to have them well executed, and they are not the production of the 'machine-like workers' of Italy." Perhaps Mr. Jarves is right; but the fact remains that the bust of "Demosthenes," which was probably selected from its fellows on the principle of relative merit by the thief who carried it off and sold it to Mr. Sypher, brought just twenty-five dollars. And everybody knows that Mr. Sypher is a connoisseur.

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THE opening of Wallack's Theatre was brilliant so far as the "front of the house" was concerned, but the entertainment on the stage was unworthy of the audience. "The School for Scandal," was often better given at the old theatre. John Gilbert's "Sir Peter," and Madame Ponisi's "Lady Candour," always admirable, reminded one of the glories of the past, but Miss Coghlan, usually excellent as "Lady Teazle," was ill at ease, and Osmond Tearle was fitted better with the clothes of Charles Surface than with his lines. The "drop" lifted at the end of the third act and disclosed Mr. Wallack uncomfortably jammed against a "front" scene between two huge baskets of flowers, one of which was surmounted by a bird in a cage. The distinguished manager, as he stood with studied ease, one hand in his vest and the other in the band of his trousers, certainly was imposing and eloquently suggestive of the past; but it did occur to me that the persons in the orchestra stalls who had disbursed fifteen dollars each for the privilege of seeing

Mr. Wallack in evening dress and hearing his very presumptuous little speech, and even those who had only paid five in the balcony were hardly given their money's worth. Mr. Wallack declared with much emotion that he was profoundly grateful, as he certainly should be, although his inadequate return for public favor does not betray the fact. He neglects the chance of playing in his own theatre before as fine an audience as could be gathered in New York and hires himself out to another manager in the same city, where any one may see him act for the price of one dollar.

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IF the public are so infatuated with the mere memory of Mr. Wallack's personality as to be willing to pay thus liberally for it, I suppose it is nobody's business but their own; but when the manager confidently says that he will make no promises but will let his past speak for the performances of the future, it is worth while to remind him that the performances for some time past have been exceedingly poor. It was not with such rubbish as "Where's the Cat?" "The Governor," and "The World," nor with the present company, that the reputation of the old Wallack's was made.

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THE seats in the new theatre are more comfortable than those in the old, and there is more room in the aisles. The interior decorations are good but not remarkable, and the same may be said of the drop curtain, the execution of which is of unequal merit. Perhaps no more beautiful theatre curtain has been seen in New York than the rich crimson satin introduced by Mr. Daly in the Fifth Avenue Theatre. The embroidered curtain at the Madison Square Theatre is excellent. Real drapery is so obviously superior to any imitation, however good the imitation may be, that it is surprising that any manager pretending to taste should perpetuate the stiff, inartistic abominations of simulated drapery. These should long ago have been consigned to oblivion with mock marbling and graining.

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MATT MORGAN'S "drop" at the Standard is as good of its kind as the "drop" at Daly's new theatre is bad. The curtain at the Union Square is an enlargement of Wagner's well-known "Chariot Race." Unfortunately the copyist undertook to adapt the original to the special purposes of the stage by painting in a cheval de frise, upon which it is obvious that the galloping horses must presently be impaled; for there is no turn in the course and there is no time for the charioteers to pull up. Notwithstanding this curious oversight, however, this is probably the best painted "drop" in the city.

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MR. WALLACK did a sensible thing in asking ladies to refrain from wearing at the theatre the picturesque Gainsborough hat of the period. The suggestion seems to have been taken in good part and generally acted upon. If it were not for the danger of high coiffures coming into fashion again the adoption of the English habit of coming without hat or bonnet might be recommended as efficacious. I remember one night going to the theatre with John Brougham, when ladies were wearing tall hats perched on mountains of braided hair. The lady in front of Brougham entirely concealed the stage from him. "This reminds me," he said, "of a visit I made with Harold Bateman to the Olympic Theatre in London. We sat in the pit, and as there was a draught from the open door, Bateman kept his hat on. Presently a man behind him touched him on the shoulder, saying 'I beg your pardon, sir, but will you take off your hat; I cannot see the stage?' 'Certainly, certainly,' said Bateman. He took his hat off and ran his fingers through his bushy hair—you remember what a lot he had—so that it stood up about six inches. A moment later, the stranger touched him again, saying, 'I beg pardon, sir; but pray be so good as to keep your hat on.'"

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"A SCULPTOR," writing to *Vanity Fair*, says: "Having seen so much in the papers lately about sham sculptors, I am reminded of a French comedy where the American artists in Rome are taken off in the following way: The curtain rises and discloses the interior of a sculptor's studio, with the artist and his 'Ghost' (as he is called in England, because he is usually required to work all night) waiting for the arrival of a patron or sitter. As soon as the sitter arrives, the 'Ghost' is quickly installed in a conven-

ient hiding-place, while the sitter takes up his position for a portrait bust. The artist then proceeds to go through the accustomed forms of his 'profession,' and to fire off what little he knows about modelling, accompanied by a large amount of tall and appropriate conversation. The sitting concluded, and the patron departed, the 'Ghost' comes from his hiding-place, and with the aid of photographs and of peeps taken during the sitting, puts the bust into artistic trim."

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IN a recent lecture on color in architecture, at the London Institution, George Aitchison remarked that in interior decoration the one great rule should be that when the eye is half closed there is but a delicate suffusion of the particular colored tone we wish to predominate; and in any perfect system we want a small portion at least of pure white and of pure black, as a scale by which all other colors and tones may be measured; but that need not prevent us from making any deep recess or portion, that is so cut off as to make itself a separate object, a spot of brilliancy or colored loveliness. As far as the external decoration of buildings is concerned, he was prepared to admit that greater dignity might be obtained by a light monochrome, than by any other means; and it was obvious that where great beauty of form and exquisiteness of line were required, colors were apt to draw off the attention from that which was too precious to be lost.

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THE New York legislature was willing to pass a bill last year giving \$400,000 for the enlargement of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, but as it was understood that Governor Cornell would veto it, it was withdrawn and a new bill was passed appropriating \$60,000 for the purpose. The bill was duly signed; but as no one, I am informed, has looked after the matter since, the Board of Aldermen has neglected to provide for the item in their estimates, and the museum consequently loses the money.

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THE publication of General Di Cesnola's album of Cypriote antiquities still hangs fire. Mr. Cobb, appointed by Mr. Osgood to prepare the work, has discovered in the general's contradictory statements so much to perplex him that he cannot proceed without some explanation from the latter. The general, however, incensed because Mr. Cobb has spoken to Mr. Feuardent on the subject of the disputed restorations, refuses to see him or communicate with him. The publisher does not know exactly what to do, but declares that at all events he will not bring out the book unless General Di Cesnola specifies in it the restorations he has made. As the latter has stoutly asserted that he has made no restorations, and as his brother trustees have certified to the correctness of this ill-advised assertion, it will be interesting to see which horn of the dilemma will be taken by these honorable gentlemen.

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AT the recent sale of the Fales art collection at Kirby's auction rooms, a large quantity of pretty rubbish brought high prices. But the most amusing purchase was that of No. 1200, described in the catalogue as a "Royal Sèvres Vase and Candelabra. An extraordinary example of mediæval (*sic*) workmanship, from one of the French palaces, purchased by the late owner from an old French family." This wonderful work of art, which, after a lively competition, was knocked down to a Mr. Dickinson for \$1125, is a sham of the first water. Mr. Watson, the dealer, picked it up in London in 1880, paying £16 for it. He sold it to George Fryer, a Philadelphia dealer, for \$175, and Fryer sold it in turn to Mr. Fales for \$250. It has no beauty of any kind; it is not old Sèvres at all, and is in a most dilapidated condition, being largely composed of putty, paint, and cement. As an offset to this there were two real bargains; one, an early Deck plaque, beautiful in color, decorated by Anker, which Messrs. Gilman Collamore & Co. bought for a song; and an old curious Majolica tile which Lanthier bought for \$10, and sold at a slight advance to Mr. Robert Hoe, Jr. This tile was stolen from the Musée de Cluny during the Commune and sold to a French gentleman in Philadelphia, who as a great favor gave it to Mr. Fales. It is admirably decorated with a copy of a painting by Caracci of Mars and Venus. No doubt several hundred francs would be paid for its return to the Cluny.

MONTEZUMA.